## **CLAIMS**

- 1 1. A method for managing interruptions to a network user, the interruptions being generated
- 2 by a plurality of senders on a network, the network user having a permanent reception list the
- 3 method comprising:
- 4 modifying a temporary reception list in response to one of a retrospective activity and a
- 5 prospective activity;
- 6 receiving an interruption from one of the senders on the network;
- 7 presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the permanent reception list and
- 8 the temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the one of the senders on the
- 9 network.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein modifying the temporary reception list comprises adding
- 2 an entry to the temporary reception list upon a determination the time until the occurrence of the
- 3 prospective activity is less than a predetermined time.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein modifying the temporary reception list comprises
- 2 removing an entry from the temporary reception list upon a determination that the age of the
- 3 retrospective activity exceeds a predetermined time.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein the retrospective and prospective activities comprise
- 2 calendar-based entries established by the user.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of presenting the interruption further comprises:
- 2 receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption;
- 3 comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value defined by the network
- 4 user; and

- presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value exceeds the threshold value.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
- 2 receiving a user status request from one of the senders;
- 3 generating a generic status message if the permanent reception list and the temporary
- 4 reception list do not include an entry associated with the sender of the user status request; and
- 5 generating a customized status message if one of the permanent reception list and the
- 6 temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the sender of the user status request.
- 1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein presenting the interruption comprises presenting an alert
- 2 to the network user if one of the permanent reception list and the temporary reception list
- 3 includes an entry associated with the one of the senders.
- 1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the alert comprises a signal that an interruption has been
- 2 requested, and at least one portion of an initial message from one of the senders and an
- 3 identification of the at least one of the senders is stored in a table for inspection by the user.
- 1 9. The method of claim 7, wherein the alert comprises at least one of a portion of an initial
- 2 message from the one of the senders and an identification of the one of the senders.
- 1 10. The method of claim 7 further comprising providing expanded information for the one of
- 2 the senders to the network user in response to a user request.
- 1 11. A computer program product for use with a computer system, the computer program
- 2 product comprising a computer useable medium having embodied therein program code
- 3 comprising:

- program code for modifying a temporary reception list of a network user in response to one of a retrospective activity and a prospective activity;
- 6 program code for receiving an interruption from a sender on the network; and
- 7 program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the temporary
- 8 reception list and a permanent reception list of the network user includes an entry associated with
- 9 the sender.
- 1 12. The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for modifying a
- 2 temporary reception list further comprises program code for adding an entry to the temporary
- 3 reception list upon a determination the time until the occurrence of the prospective activity is less
- 4 than a predetermined time.
- 1 13. The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for modifying a
- 2 temporary reception list further comprises program code for adding an entry to the temporary
- 3 reception list upon a determination that the time since the occurrence of the retrospective
- 4 activity is less than a predetermined time.
- 1 14. The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for modifying a
- 2 temporary reception list further comprises program code for removing an entry from the
- 3 temporary reception list upon a determination that the age of the retrospective activity exceeds a
- 4 predetermined time.
- 1 15. The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for presenting the
- 2 interruption further comprises:
- 3 program code for receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption:

- program code for comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value

  defined by the network user; and

  program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value
- 1 16. The computer program product of claim 11 further comprising:
- 2 program code for receiving a user status request from a status requestor;
- 3 program code for generating a generic status message if the temporary reception list and
- 4 the permanent reception list do not include an entry associated with the status requestor; and
- 5 program code for generating a customized status message if one of the temporary
- 6 reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the status
- 7 requestor.

7

- 1 17. The computer program product of claim 11 wherein the program code for presenting the
- 2 interruption comprises program code for presenting an alert to the network user if one of the
- 3 temporary reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the
- 4 sender, the alert comprising at least one of a portion of an initial message from the sender and an
- 5 identification of the sender.

exceeds the threshold value.

- 1 18. The computer program product of claim 17 further comprising program code for
- 2 providing expanded information about the sender to the network user in response to a user
- 3 request.
- 1 19. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave for use with a computer system
- 2 having a display and capable of generating a user interface through which a user may interact
- 3 with the computer system, the computer data signal comprising:

- 4 program code for modifying a temporary reception list of a network user in response to 5 one of a retrospective activity and a prospective activity; 6 program code for receiving an interruption from a sender on the network; and 7 program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the temporary 8 reception list and a permanent reception list of the network user includes an entry associated with 9 the sender. 1 20. The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for modifying a 2 temporary reception list further comprises program code for adding an entry to the temporary 3 reception list upon a determination the time until the occurrence of the prospective activity is less 4 than a predetermined time. 1 21. The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for modifying a 2 temporary reception list further comprises program code for removing an entry from the 3 temporary reception list upon a determination that the age of the retrospective activity exceeds a 4 predetermined time. 1 22. The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for presenting the 2 interruption further comprises: 3 program code for receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption; 4 program code for comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value 5 defined by the network user; and 6 program code for presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value
  - 23. The computer data signal of claim 19 further comprising:

exceeds the threshold value.

7

1

2 program code for receiving a user status request from a status requestor; program code for generating a generic status message if the temporary reception list and 3 4 the permanent reception list do not include an entry associated with the status requestor; and 5 program code for generating a customized status message if one of the temporary reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the status 6 7 requestor. The computer data signal of claim 19 wherein the program code for presenting the 1 24. 2 interruption comprises program code for presenting an alert to the network user if one of the temporary reception list and the permanent reception list includes an entry associated with the 3 4 sender, the alert comprising at least one of a portion of an initial message from the sender and an 5 identification of the sender. 1 25. The computer data signal of claim 24 further comprising program code for providing 2 expanded information about the sender to the network user in response to a user request. 1 26. A computing system comprising: 2 a display screen; 3 a user input device; and 4 a processor executing a network user communications program to manage interruptions 5 to a network user, the interruptions being generated by a plurality of senders on a network, 6 wherein each interruption is presented to the network user on the display screen if one of a 7 permanent reception list and a temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the 8 respective sender.

- 1 27. An apparatus for managing interruptions to a network user, the interruptions being
- 2 generated by a plurality of senders on a network, the network user having a permanent reception
- 3 list, the apparatus comprising:
- 4 means for modifying a temporary reception list in response to one of a retrospective
- 5 activity and a prospective activity;
- 6 means for receiving an interruption from one of the senders on the network;
- means for presenting the interruption to the network user if one of the permanent
- 8 reception list and the temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the one of the
- 9 senders on the network.
- 1 28. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for modifying the temporary reception list
- 2 comprises means for adding an entry to the temporary reception list upon a determination the
- 3 time until the occurrence of the prospective activity is less than a predetermined time.
- 1 29. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for modifying the temporary reception list
- 2 comprises means for removing an entry from the temporary reception list upon a determination
- 3 that the age of the retrospective activity exceeds a predetermined time.
- 1 30. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for presenting the interruption further
- 2 comprises:
- means for receiving an urgency value associated with the interruption;
- 4 means for comparing the urgency value with an interruption threshold value defined by
- 5 the network user; and
- 6 means for presenting the interruption to the network user if the urgency value exceeds the
- 7 interruption threshold value.

- 1 31. The apparatus of claim 27 further comprising:
- 2 means for receiving a user status request from one of the senders;
- means for generating a generic status message if the permanent reception list and the
- 4 temporary reception list do not include an entry associated with the sender of the user status
- 5 request; and
- 6 means for generating a customized status message if one of the permanent reception list
- 7 and the temporary reception list includes an entry associated with the sender of the user status
- 8 request.
- 1 32. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the means for presenting the interruption comprises
- 2 presenting an alert to the network user if one of the permanent reception list and the temporary
- 3 reception list includes an entry associated with the one of the senders, the alert comprising at
- 4 least one of a portion of an initial message from the one of the senders and an identification of
- 5 the one of the senders.
- 1 33. The apparatus of claim 32 further comprising means for providing expanded information
- 2 for the one of the senders to the network user in response to a user request.